

REMARKS

The Examiner rejected all pending claims (1-14) under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by Rice ('365). This patent describes a roller assembly that includes multiple roller sections 32 coupled together by means of a mid collar 34 illustrated in Figs. 2 and 6. The Examiner interpreted the mid-collar 34 as being a resilient sleeve capable of urging adjacent roller sections apart and of covering a gap between them.

In col. 4, lines 41-54, the patent describes these mid-collar elements 34 as being "in the form of a symmetrically shaped ring formed of bronze or other noncorrosive metal. The mid-collar 34 is shaped so as to have a pair of opposed circular lips 36 ... the end of each roller body section 32 is formed to define an annular slot 40 ... To ensure a secure compression fit of the mid-collar 34 to the roller body section 32, annular slot 40 defines a circular boss 41 with an outer diameter that is slightly greater than the inner diameter across the annular lip 36 of the collar 34." Thus, it is clear that the mid-collar 34 of the Rice patent is simply a compression-fit coupler use to connect tightly, with no gap, the ends of the roller sections of the invention. Being made of bronze or other metal, the mid-collars 34 are not a resilient material capable of urging the

roller sections 32 apart and the figures clearly show that the roller sections are in tight contact (with no gap between them).

The present invention, on the other hand, is based on the idea of providing an axial gap between roller sections to accommodate thermal expansion and a resilient sleeve urging the sections apart to take up slack and to cover the gap to prevent debris from affecting the function of the roller. Accordingly, Claim 1 recites "... a plurality of roller sections having end connectors for coupling adjacent roller sections, wherein the improvement comprises a gap in said end connectors and a resilient sleeve covering said gap and urging said adjacent roller sections apart."

It is respectfully submitted that the mid-collars 36 of the Rice invention are neither resilient, nor do they cover a gap between adjacent roller sections or urge them apart. To the extent that a cavity is created inside the butting ends of the roller section, such cavity is not a gap between sections. Therefore, three claimed features distinguish the present invention from the roller described by Rice and Claim 1 as well as Claims 2-7 depending therefrom are clearly not anticipated.

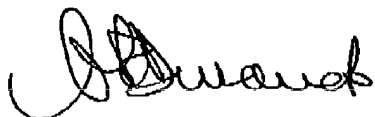
With respect to method Claims 8-14, they recite the steps of "providing a gap in said end connectors and a resilient sleeve

covering said gap and urging said adjacent sections apart." Inasmuch as Rice does not provide a gap between roller sections and does not provide a resilient sleeve covering the gap and urging the section apart, it could not possibly be said to anticipate the claimed invention, either inherently or otherwise.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that all claims, as filed, recite patentable subject matter.

No fee is believed to be due with this response. Should any fee be required for any reason, please charge it to our Deposit Account No. 17-0055.

Respectfully submitted,



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